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ADMINISTRATION SOURS ON MILC PLEDGE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) said an administration statement today on the Agricultural Appropriations Supplemental Bill demonstrates that the Bush Administration is going back on the pledge he made during the last presidential campaign to support the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program.

“Right before the last presidential election, President Bush stood in Wausau, Wisconsin and pledged that he would do everything possible to restore the MILC program. Today, we see what his support really means,” said Obey, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. “We’ve received official notice from the President’s office that he will veto the Agriculture Disaster Supplemental Appropriation bill if it comes to his desk; and they specifically singled out a provision in the bill that would provide a one-month extension of MILC as one of the reasons. That opposition stands in stark contrast to the President’s public pledge.”

Obey said the Appropriations Committee included the MILC provision in the Agriculture Disaster Supplemental bill to close the MILC-Gap and ensure dairy fair treatment in the next Farm Bill. “Because of a budget gimmick in the last Farm Bill, MILC expired in 2005, two full years before the other major commodity programs. Last year, when we extended MILC, the Congressional leadership once again left dairy on an uneven footing – ending payments a month earlier than other commodity programs and creating a MILC-Gap that denies dairy a guaranteed seat at the table at the start of negotiations for the next Farm Bill,” Obey said. “As a practical matter, what the Committee is doing in the Supplemental is not a substantive change; they are simply eliminating a gimmick that was included when the last Farm Bill was passed and putting dairy back on an even footing by extending MILC payments through the end of

September and closing the MILC-Gap.”

“I can understand why a President from Texas doesn’t mind if dairy is at a disadvantage to cotton and feed grain crops, but that doesn’t mean that a Member of Congress from Wisconsin should buy into that same discriminatory scenario. That’s why Herb Kohl, Russ Feingold and I are fighting to make sure that dairy gets its fair shake” Obey added.

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